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tapol
The Indonesia Human Rights Campaign
111 Northwood Road, Thornton Heath, Surrey CR7 8HW, UK
Telephone 081 771 2904, Fax 081 653 0322

Honorary President
Lord Avebury
Honorary Treasurer
Tom Sopel
Organising Secretary
Carmel Budiardjo

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Dr Joao de Deus Pinheiro,
Foreign Minister of the Republic of Portugal,
Lisbon

Dear Dr Pinheiro,

May I, on behalf of TAPOL, the Indonesia Human Rights Campaign, congratulate you and the Government of Portugal as you assume the Presidency of the European Community.

We are grateful for the fact that, since the tragic Santa Cruz massacre on 12 November 1991, the Government of Portugal has worked closely with the other Member States of the Community to support the people of East Timor by bringing pressure to bear on the Indonesian Government to end the atrocities that have brought so much misery and loss of life.

The recent attempt by the government in Jakarta to placate its international critics will in no way lift the burden of suffering for East Timor. Jakarta's inquiry commission is no substitute for an independent commission which the United Nations should send to East Timor without delay. Only in this way will there be a full investigation of the events on that terrible day.

In the opinion of TAPOL, President Suharto's decision to replace two generals by two other generals is a futile exercise in damage limitation. Nothing can change in East Timor until Indonesia is forced to end its illegal occupation and withdraw all its troops. Everything we hear about the situation there convinces us that there will be yet more repression and yet more deaths for as long as East Timor remains under Indonesian occupation.

More than 50 East Timorese are now awaiting trial for engaging in legitimate activities in support of independence and participating in peaceful demonstrations. TAPOL recently addressed the Dutch Presidency of the Community, seeking its help in calling for the immediate and unconditional release of all these political prisoners. We very much hope that this matter will receive your close attention.

It is our fervent wish that, during the six months of Portugal's Presidency, the European Community will persuade the United Nations Security Council to consider the question of East Timor. There should be peace talks on the future of the country, involving representatives of the people themselves, including those who have waged armed resistance since the beginning of the Indonesian occupation.

I can assure you that TAPOL will do all it can to promote the cause of East Timor's independence and to support the East Timorese people who continue to suffer under Indonesian occupation.

Yours sincerely,

Carmel Budiardjo